

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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**GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER PROCLAIMS MAY 2007 AS
“DROWNING PREVENTION MONTH”**

Following Simple Safety Tips Could Save a Life This Summer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO – With childhood drowning as a leading cause of death among California children, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has proclaimed May 2007 as “Drowning Prevention Month.” In conjunction with the Governor’s proclamation, the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) is kicking off a six-month effort with the Drowning Prevention Foundation to raise awareness about risks that can lead to childhood drowning accidents.

“It saddens me and all Californians when we hear that a child has drowned,” said Governor Schwarzenegger. “As we enter the peak swimming months of May through October, we must be more vigilant in protecting our children.”

Drownings can occur in swimming pools, hot tubs and even five-gallon buckets. In addition to the high number of drowning deaths each year, near-drowning accidents often leave victims with permanent disabilities. Currently, 661 people with developmental disabilities receive services in California from DDS as a result of surviving near-drowning accidents. In 2004, 63 children under age 5 died as a result of these preventable accidents.

Safety guidelines published by the Drowning Prevention Foundation include the following:

- Closely watch young children playing in or near any body of water, public pool or bathtub.
- Never leave a child unattended near water while you answer the telephone or doorbell, attend to another child or work on household chores, even for a few seconds.
- At large gatherings, designate an adult to watch children who are playing.
- Fence your pool on all four sides with a barrier that is at least five feet high. Move lawn chairs, tables and other potential climbing aids away from the fence to help keep out children. Any gate or door leading to the pool area should be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward, with the latch placed on the poolside and out of reach.
- Install panic alarms on all house doors and windows leading to the pool area, automatic sliding door closers and an automatic safety cover over the pool.

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- Drain off water that accumulates on top of a pool cover. A child can drown in as little as two inches of water. Completely remove the cover before allowing children in the pool.
- Keep reaching and throwing aids, such as poles and life preservers, on both sides of the pool.
- All non-swimmers should wear approved personal flotation devices (life vests) when they are near water and especially near rivers and streams.
- Swimming lessons do not ensure safety. A child who falls into water unexpectedly may panic and forget his or her swimming skills. Adults who serve as caretakers for children who swim should know how to swim themselves and also be certified to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in an emergency. Immediate CPR could prevent death or massive brain damage.

For more information, including the Governor’s proclamation and drowning prevention tips, please log on to www.dds.ca.gov/drowning.

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